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POCAHONTAS

By

JENNIE HELMES BLACHERT



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A. L. O.

POCAHONTAS

By Jennie Helmes Blachert

IN the heart of old Virginia,
Where the walnut, pine and hemlock
Laced and interlaced their branches,
Where the sunbeams filtered dimly,
Where the James and Rappahannock
O'er their pebbly road-beds ran,
In this spot of lavish nature
Dwelt a chieftan—Powhatan.

Here for years he dwelt, and peaceful,
In a lodge, a tent or tepee,
Hung with Antlers' skins and saplings.
Round about were modest lodges
Wherein dwelt the chief's advisers;
Stalwart veterans of the forest,
Men of sinew, brawn and muscle—
Men whose courage never faltered,
Wavered not in face of danger.

Thus he dwelt in peaceful quiet,
Fearing not the din of warfare.
Here the bubbling Chicahominy
Swirled and capered
Gleamed and glinted
Midst the spray, its waters swishing,
Kissed the brown feet of the warriors
As they launched their barks for fishing.
Sang its song so sweet and tender,
Darting forth in merry ripples—
Rippling on for very joyousness,
Through its sedgy, moss-strewn shores.

Here, at even came Pocahontas,
(Best beloved of Chief Powhatan,)
Beads of wampum twine her tresses,

Purple black their wavy sheen
Fall in ripples to her waist line.
Paused she close beside the river,
Shades her eyes so dark and somber,
Somber for their very blackness,
With a hand so small and shapely;
Pushes back the rippling meshes
From a brow of dusky color;
Shades her eyes, keeps out the sun's rays,
As it sinks in glorious splendor
Past the brow of yonder hill-top.
Tall and willowy, grace, untutored,
Supple as the gray gazelle,
Never princess of the pale face
Wore a crown one half so well,
As the circle of the sun's rays
Round her beauteous forehead fell.

Gently swaying, eager, listening,
Hears she (keen of ear and quick of thought),
Swish of oars of steady rowing,
"Braves returning from the hunt"
Ran her thoughts thus,
While the birds sang, leafy sheltered,
Bowered in nature's gorgeous plumage
To their mates high in the tree tops.

Waits she thus to greet the warriors,
Lo, a bark from forest hiding,
Rocket-like shoots into view.
Pale-faced braves in curious trappings
Burst upon her wondrous vision.
Blanched her color, ceased her heart beats,
Chiseled as from sculptor's marble,
Statute-like she stands before them.

Fleeks of crimson tint the tree tops.
Shadows through their branches flicker,
Lengthening out in droll grotesqueness,

Men and maiden by the river.
Long she stands thus, tall and stately,
Pensively she waits and listens,
Listens to this strange new language,
Till "Powhatan" wakes her senses,
Fills her, thrills her,
As it fell from lips of strangers.

Starts she then, her head bent slightly,
While she turns and swiftly beckons,
With her small hand beckons follow,
"I will guide you to the chieftain."
Through the forest, dense and tangled,
By a narrow trail she led them,
Till at length they merge from shadows
Into nodding Indian corn fields;
And a faint haze tints the sunset,
Night is creeping o'er the village.
To the Chieftain's lodge she enters,
Beckons on her pale-faced followers.

Never pausing, like an arrow
From its quiver,
Passed she to the Chieftain's side,
Took his hand and softly murmured
In her silvery Indian tongue,
While her eyes looked straight and earnest
Into those stern eyes above her,
"Sire, welcome thou the pale face!"
Turned she then, in tones commanding,
"Chieftains, offer them the hand."
Then with firm step came she forward,
Gave her hand unto the leader.
While the Chief, austere, menacing,
And his followers, grim and silent,
Paused before each stranger pale face
Giving none a hearty hand clasp.
Though no outward sign was given,
In their eyes shone disapproval.

While Night, the sable goddess
Wraps the village in its mantle,
One sad whippo'will is singing,
Buried as it is in woodland;
Dull and cheerless falls the echo
Eerie, dreary, chills the listener—
That weird song so sad and mirthless.
Pocahontas lifts the door flap,
Pausing not to turn her head 'round,
Passed she out into the darkness.
Thus in life are light and shadow
Swiftly following one another.
Passed she out into the darkness
And the darkness closed about her.

Long and weary 'round the campfire,
Chief Powhatan and his warriors
Held their council to determine
Whether peace the pale face's portion
Or the stake should be their doom.
Leaped the flames high as the tree tops,
While its lurid, fitful glimmer
Fell on faces darkly glowing,
Fierce, relentless, fell, forbidding,
While the canker of superstition
Burrowed deep into their vitals
Held its throne in tyrants bondage.
From the east shone streaks of daybreak,
Faintly fanned the breeze of morning,
Here the pipe of peace was proffered,
(Emblem of the tribes of redmen.)
In the pipe the pledge of friendship
To the pale-faced braves was given,
In its smoke they pledged protection
To this wandering band unknown.
In the little hamlet, Jamestown,
Dwelt there then the early settlers

White men from the land of England,
Far off from their native homeland.
Grand, majestic boomed the breakers,
High the swell as turret's dome,
Wide the waste and deep the waters,
Foamed 'twixt them and native home.

Nestling close beside the river,
Picturesque and well nigh hidden,
In the meshes of the forest,
Rude log cabins, hewn from pine trees,
That before had stood for ages,
Towering upward toward the heavens.
Softly sighing through their branches,
Summer zephyrs gently swaying,
Sheltering arms to nest, and birdlings,
Torn astunder from thy comrades,
Sorrowing thy form relaxes,
Shorn of raiment, naught remaineth
Save the trunk; thy heart is riven;
Cleft in twain by ruthless axes.

While around the wide old fireplace,
Children play and watch the shadows
Of the flames mount to the ceiling,
Play mad pranks around the fire dogs,
While in majesty from crane
Hangs the great old fashioned kettle
Singing songs of coming feasting.
Savory odors taunt the nostrils
As the steam clouds mount the ceiling.
Nevermore thou'l roam the forest,
Nevermore the daisies nibble;
Nevermore thou'l leap and gambol
Mongst thy mates so fearless free.
Gone for thee, thy days of feasting;
Sleek, fat deer, the huntsmen's musket
Cleft thy heart, as cleft the pine tree.

While the mother plies the needle
Or the spinning wheel's employ
Hums a tune of homely sweetness,
Stopping oft to note the cradle,
Wherein lies her slumbering boy.

Peaceful days to those, the settlers,
Naught disturbs complete repose,
Save the idlers in their vineyard,
Slothful ones, who, well content,
Eat the bread the toilers garner.

Ruffian band, who, through their daring,
Brought on feud and discontent,
Roaming 'round in aimless fashion
Met they then a band of Indians
From the white man's camp returning;

Bearing many gaudy trinkets—
Trappings of the huntsman's skill.

Taunted they provoked their anger,
Followed up by blows and strife,
Desist not their dangerous warfare,
Ceased they not their passions rife,
Till a brave lad of the pale face,
Sacrificed his bright young life.

Lay he there upon the grass plat,
Pale and still from eruel strife.
O'er his temple, 'cross his forehead,
Branded by a redskin's knife;
Thus began the ominous wooing
Of the Indian's ire and craft.

Days of terror; nights of vigil;
Helpless handful, alien band,
Midst an enemy remorseless,
Tireless, watchful, intrigueing,
Skulking, prowling, unrelenting.

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Steal with me into the wigwam  
Wherein dwells the great Powhatan,  
King of this great tribe of redmen.

On his throne of massive cedar,  
Carved in quaint and curious patterns,  
Sat in majesty this monarch.  
At his right hand Pocahontas,  
Sorrowing, her head bent lowly,  
While her brown hands, clasped before her,  
Lace and interlace the fingers;  
Mute and silent, sad and pensive,  
Gazing under sweeping lashes,  
At the bound and helpless captive  
Calmly waiting death before her,  
While two brawny, forest redmen  
Bared to waist, their war clubs brandish,  
Frowningly await the signal to descend  
With death-like vengeance,  
O'er a foe they hope to vanquish.

Pocahontas waits not longer;  
Prone upon her knees beside him,  
From the cruel stones for pillow  
Lifts his head upon her bosom;  
While her face suffused and streaming  
O'er with tears, like rainclouds flowing,  
Pleaded with the Chief for mercy;  
Begged him for the captive's pardon.

Marshalled well her allied forces,  
Poised her bow with studied art;  
Aimed the arrow steeped in nectar,  
Sent it straight from heart to heart.  
Her's the hand to sweep his heart strings,  
Stir the chords to love and mercy;  
Her's the eye, that wild, free birdling,  
Winging love into his soul.  
Conquered by this maid of forest,  
Vanished hatred, malice, vengeance,  
Wild, free, beauteous, pagan princess,  
Child of Nature; nature's goddess.

Cheated thou the warrior's death club;  
Cheated; death hath skulked away,  
Bearing flames within his eye-balls;  
Vanquished hence amid the shadows  
Death's invisible, winged with fire,  
    Hide, "Father Time" thy cycle's broken;  
Cracked is the hour glass, Time's a liar.  
Rise, O Captive, taste thy freedom,  
    Love hath sweetened well the draught;  
Storm clouds black o'er tree tops hover,  
    Peace waves through their branches waft.  
Lightnings flash, and rocks the wigwam,  
    Soughs the wind as dirges sung;  
In it speaks the great High Spirit,  
Awe hath charmed the Chieftan's tongue.

Nevermore the noble Chieftan  
    In his bark canoe goes floating  
O'er the the bosom of the waters  
    Of the laughing Chicahominy.  
Nevermore the wandering breezes  
    Coyly flitting mongst the wild flowers  
Whisper to the listening daisies  
    While as dew pearls fall the showers  
Of a trysting place, or grotto,  
    Formed by nature for two lovers  
Of two lives that blent, and blending,  
    Joined two nations—white and red men.  
How, from out the land of Pale Face  
    Came a youth of noble lineage,  
Noted for his deeds of valor,  
    For his many deeds of daring,  
How he wooed and won the princess  
    From her father, home and kindred  
From the wigwam and the forest,  
    And the flowing Chicahominy:  
Carried her to distant England  
    O'er the waters fraught with danger  
To his land of pomp and splendor.  
    How she severed all the home ties,  
Leaving all things for the stranger.

Like a flower, some bright exotic,  
From its native heath uprooted,  
To the glare and light of hothouse  
Droops and fades, and fading, dieth.  
Thus she perished, ere the morning  
Of her youth had merged its noonday.

On her brow of marble chiseled,  
Noblest art—the craft of Pale Face,  
Mounted o'er her tresses flowing  
Olive wreath, peace to the red race.  
Round her form in regal splendor  
Wraith-like folds of snowy whiteness  
Cling in softest sheen about her.

One small foot, firm, bold and fearless,  
Rests on arrow sheathed in quiver.  
While above her, held triumphant,  
Lightly resting on her brown hand,  
Snow-white dove with branch of Olive,  
Poised its wings in eager waiting,  
As another of its kindred  
Flitted forth adown the ages  
On its mission—peace proclaiming.



Loving tribute to thy memory,  
To the noblest type of woman.  
Brave, courageous, fearless, dauntless,  
Loving, tender, kind and beauteous,  
America's princess—Pocahontas.









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